TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE FRENCH FAMILY: WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY

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This thesis analyzes the change in familial roles occupied by working-class French women during the late nineteenth century. These changes occurred against the shifting political framework of France during this period, as the state transformed from the Second Empire to the Third Republic. An extensive examination of the modifications working-class women's lives underwent through the aspects of: motherhood, legislation, and employment illustrate the shifts in their role within the family structure. As such, this analysis offers a distinct focus on the social and political histories present during this transition.

A great transitional period occurred in France during the late nineteenth century. The conclusion of the Second French Empire and Napoléon III's reign characterized this time politically. Resulting from the Franco-Prussian War, France's defeat in 1871 added to shifting societal views of population and nationalism. All of these factors culminated in the formation of the Third French Republic. In addition to the political changes of late nineteenth century France, political opinions regarding women began to shift. Changing ideals of motherhood altered this mindset. This paper will seek to address, analyze, and argue how the familial roles of working-class French women shifted throughout the latter portion of the nineteenth century, within the social and political contexts of European Industrialization and the beginning of the Third Republic. This exploration of: motherhood, familial legislation, and employment, will reveal a deeper understanding of how women's roles within the familial structure transformed. In addition to presenting the previous scholarship on this topic, this paper will seek to explore and allude to its relevance within our present-day context.

Although present throughout the majority of the nineteenth century, concerns regarding infant mortality and infanticide became especially classist during the latter portion. The rise in nationalism propelled changes in societal perceptions of motherhood, specifically working-class mothers. In doing so, this modified viewpoint also influenced the importance motherhood held in

comparison to women's morality. Morality no longer sustained the utmost concern from the public's perspective. Instead, anxieties over raising children properly and ensuring they lived to adulthood trumped apprehensions about women maintaining their moral responsibilities.

Additionally, modifications to the legalities of unions and family law pertaining to children expose how legislation during this period reinforced this new familial role. The obligations of married couples reflect gendered expectations during the late nineteenth century. With the legalization of divorce for a second time in France during the 1880's, some aspects of familial legislation became more liberal. However, after reflecting on the social context of France during this time, it is clear divorce legislation actually served to reinforce a women's role, specifically those of lower classes, within the typical family structure. This paper will also take information gathered from previous scholarship a bit further and examine the relationship between changes in governmental attitudes towards abandoned children and the shift in republican ideals about women within the family structure.

Lastly, the expectation of working-class women entailed earning a wage to help support their families. Understanding the context of their employment and changes underwent during the late nineteenth century further illustrate the shifting manner of their role within the family structure. Industries during this period remained quite gendered by the workers they employed. Thus, mainly textile factories hired females. Issues associated with industries women worked for included: legislation regarding child labor, preventative regulations for compromising women workers' positions, and the gendered wage gap. These issues and the influences of home industries all served to reinforce a woman's place within her family as they functioned to uphold societal expectations of good wives and mothers.

Motherhood

In many ways throughout the late nineteenth century, the definition of "motherhood" changed.[1] Previous scholarship on the topic of French motherhood during this period illustrates the prevalence wet-nurses occupied within the family life of citizens until legislation drastically limited this form of work. Joshua Cole, professor at the University of Michigan, sheds light on this phenomenon in the article "A Sudden and Terrible Revelation". Through an examination of laws enacted during this period regarding wet-nurses, Cole reveals the effects such legislation had on how women observed their roles as mothers. Another prominent aspect of motherhood researched by other scholars on this subject is infanticide. Although little statistical evidence on infanticides during the late nineteenth century is comprehensive, a few legitimate estimates on the ratio of this issue do exist. In order to grasp a greater understanding of instances of infanticide within France during this period, I will analyze the data and observations collected by nineteenth-century French pathologist, Paul Brouardel, in his book *L'infanticide*. This analysis will include observations translated from the text's original French. The final feature of motherhood considered significantly in the academic community is the effects society's perceptions had upon the changing definition of motherhood at this time. Historian Brigitte Bechtold presents the manner in which societal opinions of working-class women influenced perceptions about infanticide in her article "Infanticide in 19th Century France: A Quantitative Interpretation".

My thesis will thoroughly investigate the situational context and shifting ideals concerning the definition of motherhood. In addition, the discussion will include rates of infant

[1] Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose, *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Ithacha, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 240-241.

mortality and infanticide to demonstrate how the perception of working class women as mothers varied amongst the other social classes. Legislation enacted during the latter portion of the nineteenth century is essential to understanding how the societal definition of motherhood became obligatory to French citizens. Lastly, this article will help facilitate an evaluation of known data pertaining to this subject matter while presenting possible explanations.

The notion of motherhood transformed drastically during the beginning of the Third Republic. One of the main driving forces behind this change was France's defeat during the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. Following this military loss, nationalist tendencies propagated throughout France. As citizens began to identify strongly with their country and reaffirm the principles of the Republic, dwindling growth patterns with respect to population also began to emerge. By the late nineteenth century, concerns regarding depopulation began to intensify within the minds of the public. General attitudes began to express fears the population of France was not increasing at the rapid pace it once had been. The common notion that large populations resulted in a robust industrial economy and stronger military influence lent itself to public anxieties over population growth, or lack thereof.[2]

As the foremost factor to population development was the reproductive patterns of women, a new perception regarding French mothers began to emerge.[3] Previously, middle and upper-class women had been viewed as the epitome of maternal goodness. Their financial stability and accessibility to resources were thought to provide their children with the necessities to succeed in society. However, this notion greatly altered as population concerns became prevalent during the late nineteenth century. With great emphasis placed on increasing the

[2] Rachel Fuchs, *Poor and Pregnant in Paris: Strategies for Survival in the Nineteenth Century (*New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 60.
[3] Lorraine Coons, *Women Home Workers in the Parisian Garment Industry, 1860-1915 Modern European History*, (New York, NY: Garland, 1987), 25-26.

populace, societal ideals began stressing the importance of infant mortality. In doing so, public perception no longer regarded working-class women as inferior mothers to their middle and upper-class counterparts. Instead, the notion of respectable mothers extended past social boundaries, making it inapplicable to any one particular class. Thus from the public's perspective, working-class women could and did embody positive examples of motherliness during this period. Through examining factors of nineteenth century maternity including: maternal ideals, infant mortality, and infanticide the results of the definitional change in 'motherhood' on working class women will become clear.

Throughout the mid nineteenth century, French legislators expressed anxieties pertaining to the health of infants, and in particular infant mortality, prior to a rise in public concern over depopulation in the 1870's.[4] Infant mortality rates had risen over the years and despite limited data, it is likely that these estimates collected by census statistics remained quite conservative.[5] One of the most influential lawmakers affecting this legislation was Senator Théophile Roussel. With the enactment of Roussel's law in 1874, the National Assembly began approving a series of laws that would severely regulate the French family. Through requiring medical inspections, mandatory licenses, and police involvement, the French government suppressed the industry of wet-nursing, which greatly affected women employed as nurses.[6] As a result, this law also had a hefty impact on families who employed wet-nurses. As opposed to other countries, such as England during this period, the popularity of employing wet-nurses in France largely transcended class boundaries as long as families could afford them. Thus, this regulation made it more difficult for families to hire wet-nurses and for these nurses to find employment elsewhere.

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[4] Joshua Cole, "'A Sudden and Terrible Revelation': Motherhood and Infant Mortality in France, 1858-1874", *Journal of Family History* 21, no. 4 (October 1996): 421.
[5] "Infant Mortality in Paris", *The British Medical* Journal 2, no. 931 (November 1878), 670.
[6] Cole, "'A Sudden and Terrible Revelation': Motherhood and Infant Mortality in France, 1858-1874", 419.

In large part, lawmakers desired these repercussions as a means to encourage mothers to feed and care for their own children. In addition, by prompting wealthier women to nurse their own babies, the laws also enabled wet nurses to care primarily for their children. However, this care existed predominantly in the form of feeding and tending to their children, since such laws restricted lower class women from seeking employment as a wet-nurse. Through the depiction of motherhood associated with Roussel's law, the public's apprehension over employing wet-nurses and the role of all mothers began to transform.

By approving laws requesting more widespread government intervention, the typical French family model was changing. Prior to this transition, during the first decade of the nineteenth century, the French Civil Code had firmly established that a patriarch would oversee his family's affairs with little to no influence from the state.[7] With the amount of government regulation of the practice of wet-nursing, the influence of the state within the family structure began to change significantly. Through framing the purpose of the law to reflect women relinquishing their duties as mothers, Roussel's law extended government interference into the family sphere in a new manner that criticized mothers and contributed to a change in the French ideal of motherhood.

By the late nineteenth century, these factors culminated in a modification of maternal ideals, especially concerning working-class women. As the definition of motherhood became more encompassing, it surpassed class boundaries and allowed working women to fulfill the role of an ideal mother. In order to influence the epitome of motherhood, the government sought to have greater influence over families. Through legislation constricting the practices of wet-nurses, the French government possessed broader control over family life. Consequently, this influence

[7] Cole, "A Sudden and Terrible Revelation," 420.

enforced the typical family model upon citizens, with the greatest fervor on the role of the mother. Since working-class women could now occupy this role and they endured societal pressure to do so, many sought to fulfill their new role as an ideal mother.

The Napoleonic Code of 1804 firmly established a close connection between moral ideals and the politically charged legislature intended to maintain this civil order. As previously discussed, the Napoleonic Code firmly reinforced the patriarchal family structure, but it also limited the rights of females.[8] Through pressuring women to adhere to a specific set of socially acceptable moral standards in order to maintain their place within the traditional family structure, the Civil Code sought to preserve a virtuous model of motherhood. A specific example of the Civil Code's power in enforcing its moral agenda was its prohibition of unwed mothers to apply for child support.[9] For working-class women, these laws would have considerably influenced how they pursued relationships and maintained their maternal responsibilities.

At the same time, working-class women were still responsible for contributing to a portion of their family's overall income.[10] Issues then arose for working women in methods for balancing society's moral expectations and their personal obligation to financially support their families. Thus as the definition of motherhood began to change during the latter portion of the nineteenth century, these women were forced to grapple with the position morality would occupy in their role as both females and mothers within France. Through an examination of public concerns, prevalence of infanticide, and the effects of working-class women's employment as a result of a societal shift in defining motherhood, an understanding emerges of how women's roles in the familial structure were altered during this time.

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[8] Laura Levine Frader and Sonya O. Rose, *Gender and class in modern Europe*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 240.

[9] Brigitte H. Bechtold, "Infanticide in 19th century France: A quantitative interpretation," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 33, no. 2 (March 2001): 168.

[10] Coons, "Women Home Workers in the Parisian Garment Industry", 12.

In addition to infant mortality rates, the other major aspect of motherhood concerning the general French public during the late nineteenth century was the issue of infanticide. Although instances of infanticide are traditionally associated with private life, for working women this aspect of their private life began to be displayed in a very public forum. This was due in large part to the moral traditions upheld by France and the position these traditions occupied in the state's politics.

As opposed to infant mortality, obtaining accurate rates on instances of infanticide is decidedly more difficult. This is due to its private and taboo nature within European society. Thus, instead of relying on state census statistics, one must depend on the number of infanticides detected and cases tried by police in order to get a rough estimate of annual infanticide occurrences. When analyzing this data, it is also important to keep in mind the number of reported abandonment cases. This is because some instances of abandonment could have been attempted cases of infanticide. In addition, records on the occurrences of abandonment are more well-documented, likely due to their less taboo and legal nature. Thus, they might be necessary in understanding with greater accuracy the numbers of infanticides during this era. Although the pertinence of abandonment cases shall be discussed in greater detail later, it is necessary to keep this in mind when analyzing statistics of infanticide.

Estimates to any degree of accuracy pertaining to infanticide in France are difficult to obtain. In 1897, Paul Brouardel, a member of the National Academy of Medicine in France, reported some data relating known cases of infanticide and the amount of such cases tried in court throughout the entire nineteenth century. Aside from a slight increase in the number of infanticides during the 1850-1860's, which began to decrease again during the 1870's, Brouardel's findings do not depict any steady increases in infanticide rates during the late

nineteenth century.[11] Along with the number of infanticides reported throughout the nineteenth century in France, Brouardel also offers a ratio of instances of infanticides and abortions for women, based on their professions at the time. Since the percentage of reported infanticides and abortions were quite similar, when combined, women working in an agricultural profession committed the majority of these illegal practices, at 37 percent. However, women working in industries contributed to the profession with the next highest combined rates of infanticide and abortion, closely followed by women employed in domestic work. Therefore, the general population perceived women seeking employment outside of their homes to be at risk of resorting to drastic measures to dispose of unwanted infants. Although this was not a new sentiment, such statistics as these only served to increase public concerns.

Of the cases recorded, Brouardel reports that only 17 percent had been the actions of married women, while single women committed the vast majority.[12] This is interesting to note, as many policies established to combat rates of infanticide in the late nineteenth century impacted both unmarried and married working-class women. Women who did not have any profession committed just over ten percent of the cases reported.[13] It is therefore understandable why the general public would consider instances of infanticide and abortion to be a larger issue for working-class women and take such an interest in combating such offenses. This is not to say such problems were definitively an issue for the lower classes as opposed to the middle and upper classes, instead it is merely an example of these reported correlative trends, which does not comment upon the degree of accuracy of such statistics or account for possible errors in the presented data.

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[11] Paul Brouardel, *L'infanticide*, (Paris, France: J.B. Baillière, 1897), 14.
[12] Ibid., 16.
[13] Ibid., 16.

Foreign publications even took a particular interest in crimes committed by French women, specifically crimes of a personal nature. For example, in a 1896 publication of the British peer-reviewed medical journal *The Lancet*, an unaccredited author wrote the article titled "The Criminality of the Frenchwoman". Within this article, the author analyzes which crimes Frenchwomen engage in and the frequency of such acts. The article utilizes data for crimes reported and prosecuted by the French government. This evidence reveals that for the year 1893, women only committed 14 percent of the overall crimes prosecuted, lower than the 17 percent caused by women in 1871-1876. Furthermore, despite the majority of crimes decreasing in the two decades following 1871, the crime which authorities predominantly prosecuted females for was infanticide. Additionally, although reported instances of infanticide had decreased within this twenty-year span, they still accounted for approximately 22 percent of the overall crimes committed by French women in 1893.[14] Therefore, although prosecuted for crimes less frequently than French males, issues like infanticide dominated the crimes French women were charged with and further perpetuated public concern.

As previously mentioned, public concern for the number of infanticides occurring during the late nineteenth century was relatively great. Specifically, this concern focused on women, both married and unmarried, from poor and working-class families. Although families can be defined in a variety of different manners, to narrow the scope of this essay, this analysis will seek to focus on married women with differing marital statuses. This includes those women who were married, divorced, or widowed. Even so, societal perceptions of lower class women employed as factory workers were quite debated. The public's opinion of female factory workers often included a factory girl trope. This notion portrayed industrial women workers as being morally

[14] "The Criminality of the Frenchwoman", *The Lancet,* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Ltd., 23 May 1896), 1443.

corrupt, encountering sexual temptation, and not being good mothers. In addition, this view of female factory workers was quite negative when compared to the general opinion of women working from home, which more often embodied a woman's obligation to her family.[15] During the late 1850's, disputes about working women committing infanticide began to emerge between conservative religious groups and many politicians. The conservatives claimed many illegitimate births and poverty were the result of women working outside of their homes in factories. In opposition, a number of politicians claimed factory work was not the sole reason these women were poorer or committed infanticides. Instead, politicians considered an array of programs for helping women become better mothers, in an attempt to combat these two issues.[16]

One method continually utilized throughout the mid-to-late nineteenth century by industries which appealed to societal desires, was separating working men and women. This was an attempt to prevent possible unwanted pregnancies, thought to occur because of women working in industries.[17] Although thought to be an effective method throughout the century, there was not substantial data to prove the separation of the sexes in a working environment led to unintended pregnancies. However, this method of separation in factory settings was also observed because industry jobs were already quite gendered. For example, employers typically sought out women and children to work with textiles. In addition to the initial separation, other elements of the working environment could also have prevented women from resorting to drastic measures for disposing of infants. This often included little to no childcare options at the working mother's place of employment and the care, when provided, was often insufficient. Furthermore, due to the limited amount of work offered to women in France during the late

[15] Marilyn J. Boxer, "Protective Legislation and Home Industry: The Marginalization of Women Workers in Late Nineteenth Early Twentieth-Century France," *Journal of Social History* 20, no. 1 (October 1986): 46.
[16] Bechtold, "Infanticide in 19th Century France: A Quantitative Interpretation", 170.
[17] Ibid., 169.

nineteenth century, it was also very likely that a working individual might be working alongside a relative.[18]

Regardless of the overall positive impact industrialization had on France's economy, the status occupied by working women actually worsened. As discussed above, despite the loss of status, the expectation remained that working-class women contribute monetarily to their families.[19] Therefore, after recognizing the inadequacies allotted by their work environment to care of their children and being less prosperous at work with respect to wages and available hours, women may have willingly prevented themselves either from having more children or engaging in sexual behaviors. In doing so, it can be comprehended that the economic environment, which popular opinion thought encouraged women to commit acts of infanticide, may actually have suppressed it. Either way the contribution of these other, probable aspects to the overall experience of working females could have prevented women from inappropriately engaging with workers of another gender and from leaving children to be mistreated by inferior childcare options.

In addition to these factors, which may have had some influence on infanticide rates during the nineteenth century, I would further this argument and propose there may have been other, larger factors at play determining such rates. As Bechtold mentioned, other elements were present which needed assessment in order to give a more accurate scope of the issue of infanticide in France at this time. For example, disparities in the ratios of infanticide for female and male children could be quite significant. Due to societal pressures including hefty dowries

[18] Bechtold, "Infanticide in 19th Century France: A Quantitative Interpretation", 171.
[19] Ibid., 179.

and the transfer of titles to the oldest male child, a discrepancy with the sex ratio for infanticides, especially among illegitimate births, had the potential to transcend class boundaries.[20]

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of affirming any claims about the rates of infanticide and abandonment is finding comparative results based on social status. This is due in large part to the private nature of these methods though, was also a result of the political power the upper class had over the working-class during this period. One reason why this information would be so pertinent is that if women in general, regardless of class, were committing such acts to dispose of unwanted children at higher rates during a specific period there may have been another factor, such as climate, leading to this change. Both Cole and Bechtold mention the possibility of additional factors that caused the increase in both infant mortality rates and cases of infanticide, respectively. Although neither scholar gives a distinct reason for why this rise in infant deaths may have occurred, it is quite likely there was another, more widespread factor contributing to these increased fatalities. Since the available figures transcending class are extremely limited, there is no way to claim this as a certainty. Thus, it is important to consider other potential factors when examining and interpreting data regarding infanticides.

Furthermore, throughout France in the nineteenth century, cases of individuals and families intentionally removing or harming infants existed as a taboo subject. The general population often thought these were mainly issues of the lower classes. Nevertheless, lack of substantial evidence of the rates at which infanticides and abandonments amongst the upper classes occurred cannot confirm this notion. The absence of complete data instead appears to present two contrasting perceptions of motherhood present for the working-class women at this time. From society's standpoint, the middle and upper classes assumed working-class females

[20] Bechtold, "Infanticide in 19th Century France: A Quantitative Interpretation", 177-178.

were immoral and shirked their maternal duties. The factory setting largely influenced this mindset, since society perceived working women engaged in illicit behaviors and disposed of unwanted children in horrific ways. There persisted a specific concern that the number of infanticides committed by working-class citizens was rising. Despite the lack of evidence that either of these were actual trends, another conception emerges. The factors of the work environment heavily influenced the role of working women, as they upheld familial expectations. Loss of status, unfit childcare facilities, and economic pressures may have all inadvertently encouraged women to have fewer children or put themselves in situations where infanticide or abandonment would have been an option.

Legislation

The former scholarship conducted on family legislation during then late nineteenth century focuses mainly on the legal unions and separations between spouses. For this reason, a great deal of previous research has featured information about the legalities of marriages, lawful separations, as well as divorces during this period. Edmond Kelly, an American lawyer who was living in Paris during the late nineteenth century, describes French marriage legislation in his book *The French Law of Marriage and the Conflict of Laws That Arises Therefrom*, originally published in 1885. Among the plethora of marital topics Kelly discusses in this book, he also describes the process for joining or dispersing a couple's combined assets, following either their marriage or divorce. In addition, Kelly offers frequent comparisons of the experiences occurring from this legislation between the middle or upper classes and the working class. This information is very important because it illustrates how, despite martial law being identical for all classes, its actual implementation varied greatly.

Another prominent aspect in the study of French family law within the academic community is divorce. An important work on this topic is the article "Divorce: From a French Point of View" written by Alfred M. Naquet and published in 1892. Naquet a French chemist and politician published this article in English, which recalled the legalization of divorce for the second time in France. Throughout the article, Naquet examines critiques of the new legislation on divorce, common trends, and the frequency of cases in the first years following the enactment of this law. In addition, Naquet contrasted aspects of the separation of bed and board as well as divorce, which offered insight into the usage and prevalence of each. In a similar manner as Kelly, Naquet also examines the class differences of those engaging in legalized separation and divorce. Along with the scholastic emphasis on legal unions, there has also been some research completed on legislation regarding abandoned children during the late nineteenth century.

Rachel Fuchs reflects on the legislative and social changes concerning abandoned children in her book *Abandoned Children: Foundlings and Child Welfare in Nineteenth-Century France.* Within this work, Fuchs describes how the process for abandoning a child and the approaches to caring for abandoned children changed drastically at this time. This occurred because of a shift from the Church to the French government in maintaining responsibility for France's abandoned children. In addition, as concerns about depopulation arose later in the nineteenth century, Fuchs analyzed the changing attitudes and care practices the government took to ensure abandoned children lived to adulthood.

Throughout the late nineteenth century, transitions occurred within the family structure, many of which become identifiable after analyzing the effects of familial legislation during this time. Although legislation regarding marital unions and separations did not vary according to social class, specific classes tended to observe these laws differently. For example, more upper

and middle class couples, as opposed to those of the working class, took advantage of legal documentation to specify separate assets belonging to each spouse as a precaution before marriage. In addition to legislation concerning martial unions, integral facets of family law also included legalized separation of bed and board as well as divorce. The first time legalized divorce existed in France occurred in 1792. After abolition of divorce in 1816, it later became legalized again in 1884. Finally, the subject of abandoned children is integral to understanding the expectations of women's familial roles at this time because notions regarding abandoned children also began to transform. Through a thorough analysis of the legalities concerning marriage, divorce, and abandoned children a deeper understanding of changes to family law at this time occurs. Furthermore, by observing both the legislature itself as well as the societal perceptions prompting alterations in this legislation, a greater comprehension arises about the shifting roles of working-class women within the family structure.

Legislation regarding marriage did not feature stipulations based on class. Regardless, some aspects of legal marriage, acquisition of assets precisely, was heavily inclined towards specific social classes. When couples married, unless previously stated, their possessions would form a community upon their marriage. This form of "community" is defined as a domain consisting of the entire combined assets of husband and wife, preceding and resulting from marriage, which the husband oversaw. Joining the assets of a husband and wife in the arrangement of a collective community occurred more often amongst members of the working class.[21]

Therefore, in most cases it was very difficult for wives to acquire their original assets without their husband's permission even after legally separating. For this reason, many upper

[21] Edmond Kelly, *The French Law of Marriage and the Conflict of Laws That Arises Therefrom*, (New York: Baker, Voorhis, 1885), 71-72.

and middle class women arranged for the drafting of legal contracts outlining each spouses' ownership of their assets. These special stipulations could be honored so long as the documentation was completed before the couple married.[22] Working class families did not pursue this method of securing property ownership nearly as often as the higher classes possibly because it was an extra expense. It is also likely the amount of assets owned prior to marriage did not total an amount thought necessary to outline special stipulations. Thus, even when working, these women depended largely upon their husbands for financial support and stability. Furthermore, this dependency reveals that through marriage law working-class women were encouraged to place their role as a dutiful spouse and mother above their obligations to earn money.

France legalized divorce for the second time during the late nineteenth century. The first time divorce became legalized was in 1792 and subsequently in 1884. Prior to the reinstatement of divorce legislation, France recognized legalized separation. The marriage partners living apart for a duration characterizes this legalized separation referred to as "separation from bed and board".[23] Although both separation and divorce were lawful methods of parting from one's spouse, the major difference was the finality imparted by divorce. The intention of separation was to live apart from one's current spouse with the intention of eventually getting back together. In these instances, couples usually did not seek a division of property.

Societal opinions towards reinstating divorce featured heavy criticism. This reaction was in large part due to trends seen throughout other European countries, such as Switzerland, where the number of divorces shortly after legalization greatly increased above the projected amount. In

[22] Ibid., 71.
[23] Alfred Naquet, "Divorce: From a French Point of View", *The North American Review* 155, no. 433 (December 1892): 725.

contrast Alfred Naquet, a nineteenth century French chemist and politician, warned his contemporaries that rushing to such negative conclusions without reflecting on the context of this situation was unfair. Naquet relayed his opinions on the subject of reinstating divorce in the article "Divorce: From a French Point of View" published in English. In addition to the likelihood a swift increase in divorce would lead to a steady decrease in the number of cases as years passed, Naquet also argued many instances of divorce actually indicate the necessity of reestablishing this law.[24] Moreover, it is clear from statistics taken shortly after the legalization of divorce that it was pertinent to working-class families. During the period of 1884-1888, the Parisian working-class filed approximately 21,000 applications for divorce.[25] Although this number of applications does not account for those applications resulting in divorce, it does illustrate the importance divorce held for working class families. The legislation authorizing divorce a second time did not have separate stipulations for couples based on class. Thus, the number of lower class applicants illustrates how pertinent lawful divorce was for the working-class.[26]

The legalization of divorce not only influenced working-class families, but especially working-class women. Prior to the legalization of divorce again, separation of bed and board became the standard practice for couples wanting to disperse from one another. Working-class spouses participated in such separations, often because one parent engaged in reckless behaviors or extramarital affairs. However, the number of recorded occurrences of working class couples separating during the mid-nineteenth century remained relatively low compared to those seeking

[24] Naquet, "Divorce: From a French Point of View", 723.
[25] Ibid., 727.
[26] Ibid., 728.

divorces after legalization.[27] As previously mentioned, this swift increase in couples wishing to split up is likely not because divorce became the vogue after it became legal. Instead, this trend formed due to the monetary constraints legalized separations had on the working class and the gendered societal expectations imparted upon them.

As opposed to middle and upper-class families, legalized separations caused greater economic issues for the working-class. For the most part, this occurred because of the financial constraints and societal expectations imparted upon families. Unlike middle or upper classes, a greater emphasis placed on divorced working men, due to social mores, conveyed they must either marry again or take on mistress. This is because societal obligations required men to provide for their children's well-being with some type of maternal figure. Although this figure could take the form of servants or boarding schools, working-class men were financially unable to provide this kind of support for their children.[28] Alternatively, even by 1892, working-class women could rarely support themselves monetarily on their own employment. In such instances where working-class women did financially support themselves, they could not raise their children as a single parent.[29] Therefore, working women were only allowed to be divorced if they married again or did not have any children.

Thus, the legislation regarding divorce reinforced a woman's role within the typical family structure. Since working women could only live independently based on their own occupation after getting divorced if they did not have any children, such legislation encouraged working-class women to stay with their spouses for the benefit of their children. Thus, the legalization of divorce prompted working-class women to occupy the typical role of a married

[27] Naquet, "Divorce: From a French Point of View", 728.
[28] Ibid., 728-729.
[29] Ibid., 729.

mother and therefore rear her children correctly. A divorced woman's only other options would be to marry again or not to have children to begin with. Furthermore, this process encouraged the working class to adhere to this strict family model during the late nineteenth century. This model placed heavy constrains on a women's place within her family and despite the ability to seek a legal divorce by 1884, such legislation actually placed additional barriers on a working woman's place within the familial structure of the time.

With the return of legalized divorce, previously abolished in 1816, lawmakers updated and modified it from the original Civil Code process of divorce. These changes not only modernized the procedure for obtaining a divorce, but also adapted the law to make it less sexist. For example, the previous law stated adultery was an adequate reason for divorce when a wife had been suspected of unfaithfulness. However, if a husband were accused of such an act, no legal action would be taken unless substantial proof of his infidelities existed. Such proof often entailed the husband's mistress physically living with the family. Nevertheless, after the passage of the new divorce law, allegations of a husband's extramarital affairs was enough for the wife to file for divorce.[30]

Even with these modifications, new divorce legislation was not altogether more liberal than it had been previously. In large part, these subtle changes demonstrate the confines imposed by the French government upon families. Just as legislation restricting wet-nursing pressured nineteenth century households to uphold a specific ideal of how a proper family should function, so too did the legalization of divorce in 1884. The government placed limitations on divorce since they can no longer included mutual consent. Thus, in instances where both husband and wife agreed to a legalized divorce, such a divorce was illegal. Although the Civil Code version of

[30] Kelly, *French Law of Marriage and the Conflict of Laws That Arises Therefrom*, 90.

divorce allowed consent as valid reasoning for divorce, the new version did not.[31] During the late nineteenth century, the main concern surrounding the allowance of spouses to agree to a divorce together included the possible threat this could have upon the institution of marriage. Lawmakers feared a lack in evidence of the failure of a marriage and the conflict thereof, would contribute to a trend of unnecessary divorces. This furthered legislators' distress that the institution of divorce could cause future generations to suffer and would threaten the typical French family model.

Changes in attitudes by the general French public towards mothers prompted a shift in the way the state viewed abandoned children. Moreover, this change presented itself in the relationship between working-class mothers, their children, and children they abandoned. In addition to furthering the effects of the state's new perceptions about abandoned children, which resulted in a new understanding of working-class women as ideal mothers, it also had negative consequences on their work lives. This section of the paper illuminates the association between working-class women and abandoned children, how changing perceptions and legislation regarding these two entities changed the concept of working-class mothers, and the effects this association had on these women's employment. The relation between working-class women and their children placed an emphasis on survival. Whether a woman's children were legitimate or not and the marital status she possessed did not outweigh her greater burden, as a working woman, of caring for her own subsistence above others, including her possible children.[32] Thus, the context of abandoned children is important to understanding how the role of working women changed within the family structure.

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[31] Kelly, *French Law of Marriage and the Conflict of Laws That Arises Therefrom*, 90.

[32] Rachel Fuchs, *Abandoned Children: Foundlings and Child Welfare in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 25.

Along with infanticide and abortion, abandonment has historically been one method individuals have used to dispose of unwanted children. By the early nineteenth century in France, the conventional method of abandoning children changed drastically. One of the major changes contributing to this and defining the abandonment process for the rest of the century was the Decree of 1811. The decree gradually transferred this duty from the Church to the state.[33] Therefore, by the mid-nineteenth century, abandoned children were under the care of the state as opposed to religious institutions. As the state became responsible for the needs of abandoned children, their priorities and methods of caring for these children shifted. Instead of Catholic institutions attempting to save the lives of unwanted children from other potential methods of rejection, the state used their resources to care for these children. During the early portion of the nineteenth century, the state's outlook on abandoned children was laden with criticism. Specifically, criticism harbored for the choices of their mothers that would eventually result in abandonment and for the children themselves, as a strain on economic resources.[34] Though, as time passed and the public's attitudes transformed, so did the state's mindset and their methods of tending to abandoned children.

Due to each hospice's required *tour*, a rotating device for placing a baby in a hospice without being seen, as required under the Civil Code, kept the identities of those actively abandoning children anonymous.[35] Thus, similar to statistics regarding infanticides and abortions, there is little data from which to glean an accurate ratio of working-class women who abandoned children to women from other social classes. Despite this, society perceived abandoned children to be a problem mainly for the working-class. Morality was a focal concept

[33] Fuchs, *Abandoned Children: Foundlings and Child Welfare in Nineteenth-Century France*, 26.
[34] Ibid., 26.
[35] Fuchs, *Abandoned Children: Foundlings and Child Welfare in Nineteenth-Century France*, 22.

in the relationship between working-class women and children of abandonment. According to public opinion, working class women were more likely to hand their children over to the state, thus, these women's own actions were under public scrutiny. As previously discussed society expected both single and married working-class women to uphold a specific set of moral standards, yet judged most women who worked outside of the home. This is because alternative forms of employment for women, such as factory work, embodied a space of immorality from society's standpoint. Therefore, when societal perceptions deemphasized morality as integral to exemplifying motherhood, the condemnation of abandoned children resulting from immorality decreased as well.

The manner, in which the definition of motherhood shifted during the latter period of the nineteenth century in France, changed the framing of the issue of abandonment. Foremost, during the late 1870's prior critics of women who abandoned their children began to recognize the difficult situations causing these women to resort to abandonment. In doing so, both critics and the public started empathizing with the economic predicament of working-class mothers. The transfer of responsibility for abandoned children from the Church to the state resulted in a number of concerns for the upbringing of these children. However, by the late nineteenth century, as society's concerns over depopulation rose, the government took a more active role in ensuring abandoned children were cared for and more likely to live into adulthood. This increased interest in abandoned children overall proves a change in society's viewpoint of working females as mothers and earners as well as the government's agenda in expanding and maturing the population.

Social implications regarding new conceptions of republican motherhood became prevalent during this period. French society transmitted these ideals through numerous methods

including small guidance books and almanacs aimed at educating new mothers. In general, the intended audience of these materials remained quite broad and included most any literate females. Although the intended audience for these advice books did not occupy a specific social distinction, this does not mean such literature altogether dismissed topics of class. Some publications included certain passages regarding the condition of lower class mothers and on occasion offered wealthier mothers suggestions for giving charity to those of lower economic standing. Although accurate estimations concerning the distributions and overall usage by mothers of these small publications present a challenge, the fact multitudes of volumes exist from numerous French publishers demonstrates the prevalence of these manuals during the late nineteenth century.

In addition, public programs exemplified a major method of relief assistance and programing for poorer mothers. At this time, community committees became more active and distributed the majority of these programs, which in previous decades had been predominantly organized by religious groups. Programs such as these encouraged financially stable citizens, in particular women and mothers, to contribute to such programs. By offering not only monetary assistance but also teaching maternal skills necessary to successfully rear children of the Republic, middle and upper-class women's responsibilities as mothers extended beyond their own children. In the mid-nineteenth century, female philanthropist groups such as the *committee of patronesses* developed across France while gaining additional influence during the latter portion of the century. These female committees functioned on the local level and sought to improve the condition of their communities with a specific interest in local children and their education. Throughout the nineteenth century, duties of these local female led committees involved inspecting nursery and primary schools, evaluating sanitary conditions, and monitoring

the children's health. In some instances, a committee of patronesses would also be responsible for organizing and distributing donations of clothing for poorer children.[36] Additionally, many of these schools attracted children from lower-class families as they offered an alternative maternal presence to working-class children while their mothers worked.[37]

Almanach des jeunes mères et des nourrices pour 1873, (*Almanac for Young Mothers and Wet Nurses for 1873*), exists as an example of one such guidebook for French mothers. Published in 1873 by the Childhood Protection Society of Lyon, France, this book also focuses on ways women of higher social standing could assist lower-class mothers by outlining numerous philanthropic methods. One such method examined in *Almanach des jeunes mères* includes wealthier mothers either contributing monetarily or participating with the *Comité des Dames patronesses*, in an effort to help their poorer counterparts.[38] In the late nineteenth century, this specific committee of patronesses existed as an organization providing support for poor mothers while teaching them practical skills for properly raising their children. This committee strove to provide new, lower-class mothers in need with advice for raising their children properly as well as financial assistance. During 1873, the main program offered by the committee of patronesses in Lyon for poor mothers began shortly after the woman gave birth and lasted for ten months. Throughout these ten months, women from the committee would participate in home visits to check on the status of both mother and child, offer practical advice pertinent to rearing children, and provide monetary incentives. Although these programs assisted new mothers in

[36] Linda L. Clark, *The Rise of Professional Women in France: Gender and Public Administration since 1830* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16.
[37] Ibid., 17.
[38] Société Protectrice de L'Enfance de Lyon, *Almanach des jeunes mères et des nourrices pour* 1873 (Paris: Librairie Franklin, 1873), 21.

many ways, as the *Almanach des jeunes mères* states, urging poorer mothers not to separate from or abandon their children existed as the main objective of such programs.[39]

The monetary incentives mentioned previously would provide much needed assistance for poorer women in dire circumstances. Since the incentives increased the longer a woman stayed in the program, especially if she successfully completed all ten months, these payments also encouraged working women to postpone returning to their jobs after the birth of their children. Thus, these committee run programs provided not only advice and skills training pertinent to republican motherhood ideals but also discouraged lower class women from working following the birth of their children by offering monetary assistance. Inevitably, the structure of these assistance programs sought to encourage new ideals of motherhood by allowing lower class women, specifically those in extreme need, with resources necessary to embody such ideals.

Primarily, late nineteenth century assistance programs taught new mothers practical skills necessary for rearing their children such as nursing while also offering financial assistance. However, these programs' underlying objective was to increase the number of healthy infants by mitigating circumstances of potential abandonment and teaching new mothers how to care for their children according to republican standards. Lastly, the effort put forth by middle and upper-class women to execute support programs in order to enable lower class women to embrace motherhood is specific to this period. Such attentiveness to the maternal abilities of lower class women marks a change in the Republic's principles of motherhood, as socio-economic status no longer deterred women from embodying this maternal ideal.

[39] Société Protectrice de L'Enfance de Lyon, *Almanach des jeunes mères et des nourrices pour 1873* (Paris: Librairie Franklin, 1873), 21.

In addition to presenting the socio-economic differences of new mothers and offering suggestions for charitable acts, the *Almanach des jeunes mères* also focuses on practical guidance to all mothers on caring for their children. Just like many other guidebooks during this period, laden throughout these works is advice on washing, feeding, and properly educating children. However, even for publications focusing heavily on practical material and advice, aspects of class differences are often still present. Another publication which takes a more medical position when offering advice is Dr. Louis Girault's *Conseils aux jeunes mères aux nourrices et aux sages-femmes pour éviter la mortalité fréquente chez les enfants en bas age*, (*Advice to Young Mothers on Nursing and Midwives for Avoiding the Frequent Death of Very Young Children*), of 1882.

Although heavily concentrated on directing mothers in caring for the heath of their children, *Conseils aux jeunes mères* also touches on issues regarding various economic situations as opposed to deeply emphasizing these topics. For example, as translated from its original French into English, the French physician Girault states in his publication, "…the infant does not demand that his father is rich or poor; it instead requires care continuously otherwise it will result in despair".[40] In this example, the economic status of the father is not a detriment to the child's success in life. Such a sentiment is also applicable to a child's mother of the same socio-economic position. Thus, the economic status of a child's family during the late nineteenth century did not hinder that child's life and accomplishments. These attitudes reflect the social changes in the status of both children, as being upheld simply for existing, and for working-class mothers, who now qualified as fit examples of Republican maternity.

[40] Louis Girault, *Conseils aux jeunes mères aux nourrices et aux sages-femmes pour éviter la mortalité fréquente chez les enfants en bas age* (Paris : Adrien Delahaye and E. Lecrosnier, 1882) : 12.

Furthermore, the prevalence of help books for new and young mothers across various social classes existed in France during the late nineteenth century. The variety and longevity of these published works illustrate the wide distribution and availability of such publications to literate individuals. While the majority of maternal guidebooks offer practical advice to women on raising their children, many publications at least touched on societal topics, mainly related to class differences. Despite the various approaches publications took in discussing socio-economic differences of new mothers, such as ways to help poorer women or simply validating their maternal status, these guidebooks clearly revealed the changes of Republican motherhood during this period. Through commending the character of women for simply enduring as mothers and offering guidance for rearing her children despite a woman's social status, these works expose the manner in which Republican motherhood not only allowed but also advocated for working-class women to fulfill the role of an ideal mother during the late nineteenth century.

Employment

Women workers existed in France long before the nineteenth century. However, the societal attitudes towards working women and concerns for their well-being became very prominent during the latter portion of the nineteenth century. As aforementioned, these attitudes mainly concerned the notion of a "factory girl" trope.[41] This stereotype envisioned women working in factories in a more undesirable light than other females working from home. These negative public perceptions of factory women included ideas that factory work encouraged moral corruption and sexual promiscuity. In addition, the general sentiment existed that these women

[41] Boxer, *Protective Legislation and Home Industry*, 46.

evaded their proper familial duties as mothers and wives and inadequately cared for their children. As a result, numerous laws passed during the last half of the nineteenth century regulated women workers. Some of these laws, regarding women's employment, attempted to protect them from corruption and compromising situations. Nevertheless, these new regulations also greatly restricted women laborers and their ability to work.

Previous scholarship on the topic of women's employment in nineteenth century France reveals how the presentation of female workers for public consumption mainly illustrated these workers as a business venture and portrayed them as beautiful or sexualized. In doing so, societal perceptions regarding women workers focused not on their skills or craft but instead constructed them into the specific image of "working girls".[42] In the article "Protective Legislation and Home Industry: The Marginalization of Women Workers in Late Nineteenth Early Twentieth-Century France", Marilyn Boxer explains how women continued to work at vocations traditionally perceived as feminine throughout the century. By often working in domestic settings or at feminine tasks tangible to their home life, working-class women were able to combine employment and family without uprooting the traditional French family structure.[43] Upon closer examination, Judith Coffin describes how the relationship between working-class women's vocations and their place within the family model make it impossible for scholars to completely separate women's waged and unwaged work during this period.[44] Coffin's research in *The Politics of Women's Work: The Paris Garment Trades 1750-1915* also reveals the differences in society's outlook between homework and factory work for women. These

[42] Judith Coffin, *The Politics of Women's Work: The Paris Garment Trades 1750-1915* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 89-90.
[43] Boxer, *Protective Legislation and Home Industry*, 48.
[44] Coffin, *The Politics of Women's Work: The Paris Garment Trades 1750-1915*, 115.

variances illuminate the shift in familial expectations of working-class women in accordance to their labor during the late nineteenth century.

In addition, understanding and accurately interpreting the disparities in wages of female and male workers in France during this period is the subject of many scholarly debates. Within their essay "Male-Female Wage Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century France", Donald Cox and John Vincent Nye remark upon the definite difference in wages of female and male workers during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Their research also reveals how studies on this wage gap are inconclusive. This is because there are many additional factors requiring consideration when examining whether or not this disparity actually resulted from gendered wage discrimination.[45] For example, although men tended to have higher wages than women did during this time, it may have been because they received more education or possessed greater skills necessary for their respective jobs. However, despite the indefiniteness of this research, the emphasis on the family wage and its gendered construction contributed highly to defining the new role of women within the republican family model.

The vocations working-class French women observed did not differ much from the mid-to-late nineteenth century. However, their vocations did greatly influence the familial structure of these women's lives, particularly with respect to their roles as wives and mothers. As previously discussed, most employed women in France worked in factories throughout the nineteenth century. The most prominent factories employing women at this time were associated with the textile and garment industries. Within the textile industry, France dominated all other European countries as the top producer of silk. Edward James Watherston, nineteenth century British scholar, even goes so far as to claim "…the silk industry of France not only far surpasses that of

[45] Donald Cox and John Vincent Nye, "Male-Female Wage Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century France", *The Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 4 (1989), 904.

any other country in Europe, but even that of China, the ancient home of the manufacture," in his book *French Silk Manufactures and the Industrial Employment of Women*.[46] Ultimately, as Watherston explores in his work, lower-class women completed the majority of work within silk factories and were integral to its production.

As an explanation for the prominence and huge success of the silk industry in France, Watherson explains this largely resulted from the distinct approach French factory owners took in training their workers, particularly female workers. The new conditions and arrangements silk factory owners utilized when training young women began during the middle of the nineteenth century and continued into the end of century.[47] While females generally comprised the vast majority of silk production workers throughout European countries at this time, French factory owners differed as they began utilizing the physical labor as well as the intellect of their female workers. In many instances, women workers received the same technical education as their male counterparts sometimes concurrently with one another.[48] By specifically seeking to educate female workers, the French silk industry distinguished itself from its foreign competitors and actually sought to create highly skilled women workers of their respective trade.

One of the most innovative methods for educating female silk workers during this period came from the development of the "convent-factory system".[49] Factory owner and entrepreneur Monsieur Jean Bonnet, founded this method in the village of Jujurieux, Burgundy in the mid nineteenth century. Within the convent-factory system, Bonnet hired young women from the country between the ages of 13 to 15 years old each of whom served a four-year contract. Bonnet boasted that he could provide women entering his program with room, board, clothes, and a

[46] Edward James Watherston, *French Silk Manufactures and the Industrial Employment of Women* (London: Deyden Press, 1879), 11.
[47] Watherston, *French Silk Manufactures and the Industrial Employment of Women*, 11-12.
[48] Ibid., 12.
[49] Watherston, *French Silk Manufactures and the Industrial Employment of Women*, 16.

small wage in addition to instructing them on the practice of silk making as well as providing them with a general education. Despite the many incentives this program offered, its first entrants were hesitant about the fulfillment of such promises.[50] The major way in which Bonnet's convent-factory system separated itself from other systems was through the usage of religion. Bonnet worked closely with the bishop of the diocese to enlist nuns as teachers for his silk workers. However, these nuns referred to as "Sœurs de Saint-Joseph" played a much larger role in Bonnet's business than simply serving as instructors. Their additional responsibilities included selecting the young women entering this program, overseeing the factory procedures, and even maintaining some business accounts.[51] The presence of the nuns and their role as overseers and chaperones for the women workers created a very successful business model for Bonnet. This is because his workers were well cared for, receiving a good education and fine living standards, and they were successful workers, since the presence and close monitoring by nuns prevented the women from pursuing any romantic liaisons or engaging in mischief.

Through his invention of the convent-factory system, Bonnet seemed to create an ideal employment situation for young female factory workers as well as himself. However, it is important to mention that most all of the female apprentices working for Bonnet left their positions after four years because they married. In fact, due to the strict supervision of the nuns, the nuns themselves often acted as matchmakers for the factory women, most all of whom were married at a chapel onsite. Watherston also mentions how during the first years of Bonnet's factory, he would attend the marriage ceremonies of workers who showed particular skills or positive conduct stating, "This was looked upon as the highest honour that could be paid to any

[50] Ibid., 17.
[51] Ibid., 18.

of the young women."[52] Being well aware and pleased with the notion his workers married upon completing their contracts within his factory, Bonnet even created a small savings account of sorts referred to as a "dot" which was a sum of money set aside for marriage.[53]

Ultimately, Bonnet's new convent-factory system built off previously existing practices in France of utilizing an all-female workforce to produce silk. In addition, the method of employing young women from rural communities was also a typical practice for the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The distinguishing features of Bonnet's methodology included his emphasis on educating his female workers to the same extent as male counterparts in their field and through stressing the presence of Catholic ideals in his workers' lives. Both of these methods enabled Bonnet to create an extremely successful silk factory and appeared to foster a positive work environment as the female workers received both compensation and education.

Nevertheless, the underlying notion these women would complete their work and studies in order to marry local farmers reveals the societal expectations of working women during this time. Although educated and trained as silk makers, these women would not continue their work for Bonnet upon marrying and the expectation persisted that all would eventually marry. Furthermore, the people of Jujurieux considered female workers in Bonnet's factories as ideal wives because they were educated, virtuous, domesticated, possessed trade skills, and had a "dot".[54] For, although some of these women may have sought other forms of employment later in life, the objective after working for Bonnet was to marry and fulfill wifely duties. Therefore, lower-class women often sought work during the nineteenth century, sometimes even receiving education alongside their training, however societal implications attempted to restrict the

[52] Watherston, *French Silk Manufactures and the Industrial Employment of Women*, 21.
[53] Ibid., 20.
[54] Watherston, *French Silk Manufactures and the Industrial Employment of Women*, 20.

window of employment for women in an effort to maintain their primary role as wives and mothers.

Throughout the late nineteenth century, employment for working-class women greatly influenced their abilities to adhere to republican ideals of motherhood and their place within the family structure. Above all else, the economic implications of these women made obtaining a livable wage their primary goal. Therefore, society expressed concerns over the possibility of working women extensively using technological advancements because it may cause them to shirk their duties as wives and mothers. However, because of their economic constraints, these new technologies only slightly influenced the lives of working-class women. In addition, the rise in 'housework' also encouraged working women to occupy their proper role within the French family. Thus, societal expectations prompted women to employ themselves in different locations, especially factories and the home, during separate stages of their lives. By adhering to such expectations, these women aligned themselves with the model of their new role within the late nineteenth century family structure.

Despite the objective of some citizens that men and women should receive the same education during the beginning of the Third Republic, the inequalities in education actually fueled the separate gendered familial roles of this time.[55] In *The Rise of Professional Women in France: Gender and Public Administration since 1830*, Linda L. Clark, a professor of history at Millersville University, examines changes within the political and educational climate of France during the late nineteenth century and how these alterations impacted the domestic sphere. Although an interesting topic, the length of this paper and the overall relevance to the positions of working-class women restrict us from delving into the larger role of formalized education

[55] Clark, *The Rise of Professional Women in France: Gender and Public Administration since 1830*, 47.

here. However, the aspects of education during the late nineteenth century pertinent to the roles of working-class women include how their differences in education and earnings as teachers further sustained their familial roles within the Republic.

Since the intention for young women completing their schooling was in an effort to prepare them for marriage and motherhood, public secondary schools removed some subjects from the curriculum of girl's secondary schools. These subjects included classical languages as well as advanced courses in philosophy and science, ultimately limiting the female curriculum to five years instead of the original seven-year course of study. While the absence of these subjects made pursuing higher education difficult for women, it also hindered their earning potential as teachers. This is because female teachers often received lower wages than their male counterparts, no matter which age level they taught.[56] Furthermore, earning disparities affected both working and middle class women during the late nineteenth century. Partially, this inequality promoted an imbalanced education system that permeated into other aspects of female life including earning potential, all culminating in a cohesive effort to train women for the ultimate aim of marrying and bearing republican children.

Despite the fact women workers existed in France long before the nineteenth century, the typical republican model for women of all classes considered their roles exclusively as mothers for the nation.[57] Thus, as the prominence of this model grew to retain the societal expectations of working-class women, so too did the disparities in the employment sector of their lives. One of the main issues that occurred during this period dealt with the "family wage". The French Labor Movement began during the mid-nineteenth century. One of the chief demands by members of this movement, the majority of who were male, consisted of substantially increasing the wage for

[56] Ibid., 47.
[57] Frader and Rose, *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, 239.

all male workers in France. Data examining the difference in wages for men and women engaging in the same forms of employment is challenging to determine because of the practice of gendered employment during the nineteenth century. Women consistently received lower wages than men, but gaging whether or not they participated in the same type of work for less pay is difficult to assert with certainty. The family wage, though not overtly, was sexist since its main objective attempted to keep working women from engaging in waged labor.[58]

The construction of the model of a family wage encouraged not only the exclusion of females from working, but also the new republican ideals of family and motherhood. For example, the concept of males needing to make enough money from their occupations to sustain not only themselves but their family members as well, also imparted a very specific role upon women.[59] This model therefore illustrates a woman's place consisted of being at home and caring for the family's children instead of working. According to this standard, a man's wages should suffice for all of his family's expenses. At the same time, the public encouraged women to reassert themselves into a precise role within the family structure. This included keeping exclusively to the domestic sphere and thus disengaging themselves from waged labor.

Although this existed as the primary mentality amongst the general public regarding employment, such a model was not representative of the realities of working-class families in France at the time. This is because lower-class women who worked did so out of necessity. Therefore, attempting to define a wage as more than that of the individual and their needs concealed the realities of French working-class families. Instead, it conveyed society's own set of objectives upon these families. As a result, during the late nineteenth century, working class women continually made lower wages than their male equivalents. This trend continued well into

[58] Ibid., 142-143.
[59] Ibid., 143.

the twentieth century. For it was not until the mid-twentieth century, with the ratification of the 1946 Constitution and its articles as well as the Labor Code, that major reforms occurred regarding equal pay regardless of gender in France.

For working-class women, securing a wage held more importance than expensive devices that may save time and effort. Therefore, even with the introduction of new technical advancements to the household, such advancements had a small impact on working-class women and instead encouraged them to retain their expected familial role. Although created with the intent of making their lives easier, working-class women did not readily purchase these technological advancements, which included the Singer sewing machine. This illustrates that even with the conspicuous republican model of motherhood in place working-class women focused their efforts more on making money than on lessening their own labor tasks.[60]

Therefore, such expensive purchases would have only been made if these devices directly improved a woman's ability to earn money. For example, the select amount of working women who purchased sewing machines was mostly comprised of seamstresses. This further depicts the manner in which the effects of technological advancements on women's work had a minute effect on working-class women who alternately upheld the new values of motherhood. Moreover, the choice in attaining wages as their primary goal as opposed to strictly upholding the new republican definition of motherhood does not illustrate working-class women diverging from this model. Instead, such examples show how women sought alternative routes for providing maternal necessities to their families, which in turn underpins the essence of this model. Although public perceptions worried about the consequences technological advancements might have on working-class mothers, the lack of necessity of these devices compared to the

[60] Frader and Rose, *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, 137.

obligation of earning wages actually reinforced the republic's general expectations of motherhood.

During the late nineteenth century, gendered labor divisions upheld the new ideals of women's roles within the family structure. However, separate societal expectations for working class women also played an extensive role in supporting the enforcement of these new ideals. The effectiveness of these societal expectations occurred in part because of the prevalence of 'homework' that resurfaced during the latter portion of the nineteenth century.[61] (For the purposes of this paper, the definition of homework shall consist of work completed at home and done by women for compensation.) Therefore, homework constructs the home into a work place thus marring the distinction between work and home as well as the public and private spheres.[62] It is imperative to note that although different, homework and factory work are not altogether separate.

With the revival of homework in France came expectations about the working-class women who would pursue this form of employment. As discussed above, common societal misconceptions surrounding working women arose due to the existence of the "factory girl" stereotype. Public expectations concerning working-class women employed in factories further strengthened this stereotype. For example, it was not typical for unmarried working-class women to engage in homework. Alternately, it was atypical for working women who had married or were widowed to partake in factory work.[63] These distinctions about women's occupations during different stages of their lives had a great deal to do with the supposition of women's roles within their families. Hence, within a familial context, the expectation of young, unmarried

[61] Coffin, *The Politics of Women's Work: The Paris Garment Trades 1750-1915*, 141.
[62] Ibid., 142.
[63] Coffin, *The Politics of Women's Work: The Paris Garment Trades 1750-1915*, 147-148.

working women directed them to work in order to obtain a wage and hone a specific craft. Once these women married, they applied this specific craft to their domestic life, allowing each to become better wives and mothers. Of course, such assumptions about the stages of women's work lacked the realistic aspect that the vast majority of working-class women continued employment after marrying for financial reasons. Therefore, the accurate representation of the expectations French society entreated upon working-class women amounted to the distinction in vocations before and after marriage.

Although notions about where women should work to better benefit their families formed from societal attitudes, in actuality the number of women who adhered to this model was widespread. In the article, "L'éloge de la ménagère dans le discours des ouvriers français au XIXe siècle" ("Praise for the Housewife in the Discourse of the French Workers in the Nineteenth Century") French historian Michelle Perrot explains the public's expectations for working-class women and how the trends of their places of employment illustrate these expectations. Perrot describes the average working-class girl as starting employment at a young age. Such a girl did not stop working until she married or at the very least had her first child. In addition, these working-class women did not continue to work outside of the home unless financial obligations arose or they became widowed.[64] These unofficial parameters greatly limited the time, place, and scope of employment women, especially those of lower social classes, could pursue at this time.

After marriage, these women contributed to their family's budget and wellbeing by sewing at home and completing household chores. In addition, according to the census of 1896,

[64] Michelle Perrot, "L'éloge de la ménagère dans le discours des ouvriers français au XIXe siècle", *Romantisme 6, no. 13* (1976), 118.

only 38 percent of married working-class women worked full-time outside of the home.[65] Although these statistics do not account for women who employed their time fully to homework, such as some seamstresses, they do illustrate how societal expectations influenced the locations women worked throughout their lives. Working class women tended to pursue their places of employment based on their family's needs. Therefore, women during this period reinforced societal expectations concerning their location of work and the contemporary ideals pertaining to their role within the family structure by keeping both within the domestic sphere, thus fulfilling the notion of an ideal maternal figure.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of working-class women within the French familial structure altered drastically throughout the late nineteenth century. This change resulted in part due to the historical context of this period. The early 1870's brought about not only the establishment of the Third Republic but also the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War, which conveyed anxieties about depopulation. From this framework arose new notions about the role of women, specifically those of the working class, within the family unit.

Attributing to this change is the shifting definition of republican motherhood. As the ideals of motherhood began to focus more on caring for children as opposed to emphasizing advantages afforded to children of higher social classes by their parents, those women eligible to be considered a 'good mother' shifted as well. Working class women now had the potential to embody these new ideals of maternity. In addition to notions about motherhood, legislative actions also helped shape the new role working women possessed within their families. Since

[65] Perrot, "L'éloge de la ménagère dans le discours des ouvriers français au XIXe siècle", 118.

divorces became legal in 1884, they offered fewer restrictions for women filing for divorce. Nevertheless, the consequences of such actions remained steep and could have negative repercussions on their children. Thus for working women, despite the ability to more easily obtain applications for divorce, continuing to remain married avoided the swift consequences which could greatly affect one's children. Such consequences included the inability to nurture their children according to the new motherhood ideals. Lastly, the expectations and realities of working women's employment during this period greatly influenced how they partook in their roles within the family structure with the dual relationship of public and private. Despite technological advancements, working women's wages proved more important than such devices as they needed to readily provide and thus care for their families. Even with the realities of working-class women having to attain wages to sustain their families, society's perceptions of the locations women should work throughout their lives persisted in its observance throughout the remainder of the century. Ultimately, these features disclose the manner in which working-class women's newly defined roles as wives, mothers, and providers within the familial structure emerged in late nineteenth century France.

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